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ABSTRACT

The use of an experiential approach to teaching and learning by an urban business college is examined. Two texts, one in personnel and the other in small business management, were used as typical models. The relationship of the experiential approach and selected learning theories (Skinner, Gestalt, Rogers, and Knowles) was also analyzed. It is suggested that the key to implementing the experiential approach is to allow the students to express their views and past experiences. By a three-step learning process, which is essentially the basic learning theory of repetition, the student works alone, then in a small group, and the small group reports on its findings. The experiential approach is suggested as an appropriate way to enable students to obtain hands-on experience in a classroom. Application of the experiential approach to a new course in career and life planning is considered. References, guidelines for using experience-based learning in the classroom, and sample student opinions of the experiential approach are included. (SW)

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EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY'S COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SELECTED LEARNING THEORIES

LEARNING THEORY MODULE

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ABSTRACT

It is somewhat debatable if the experiential approach to teaching and learning is new or old. The age of the approach is immaterial since a review of the literature and interviews prove that learning-by-doing can have a better and longer lasting impact on the student.

The problem that was investigated concerned the utilization of this approach in courses offered in an urban business school. Through two typical examples, one is a personnel course and the other is a small business management course, the various aspects of the experiential approach were explained. The relationship to selected learning theories such as Skinner, Gestalt, Rogers and Knowles was correlated to the experiential approach. All theories discussed have a direct application to the experiential approach.

All standard learning theories contain some aspects of the experiential approach. It was recommended that any instructor desiring to use "hands-on" experience in a course should strongly consider the experiential approach. This would apply not only to business courses but to all courses offered by the insititution.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ABSTRACT		i
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH	4
3.	PROCEDURES	9
	PART I THE RELATION OF FREDERICK SKINNER'S THEORIES	9
	PART II THE RELATION TO THE GESTALT THEORY	12
	PART III THE RELATION TO CARL ROGERS' LEARNING THEORY	13
	PART IV THE RELATION TO MALCOLM KNOWLES' ADULT LEARNING THEORY	16
4.	APPLICATION TO A NEW COURSE	18
5.	SUMMARY AND EXPECTATIONS	21
REFERENCES		23
APPENDIXES		
A.	GUIDELINES FOR USING EXPERIENCE-BASED LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM	26
B.	STUDENT OPINIONS OF THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH	28

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Suffolk University is a private four-year institution that willingly encourages its' faculty to experiment and use the most modern, interesting, relevant and useful learning theories possible. This constant willingness to improve and attract good students has helped Suffolk's Graduate School of Administration (GSA) and the College of Business Administration (CBA) to show a steady growth over the years. In order to maintain the high academic standing required not only by the CBA, but also by the major accreditation associations, Suffolk's CBA has joined with Suffolk's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in sponsoring several weekly seminars in various teaching and learning theories. In September, 1977, the CBA hired a new assistant dean for the purpose of encouraging the faculty to pursue additional degrees and participate more actively in various organizations and seminars.

For many years business schools have been striving to provide their students with educational experiences that come as close as possible and practical to "hands-on" experience. Some schools have developed a cooperative plan that alternates school and work experience. Most schools have used the case method which many educators feel is the closest to hands-on experience that one can achieve within the classroom. More recently, actual cases are being brought into the classroom and the students may even serve as consultants to an actual business in trouble. The greatest learning is assumed to occur when the relevance to the student is incorporated into a teaching method. With the experiential

approach, Erickson (1977) claims that "...as capacity for freedom creates conditions that make greater acceptance possible, which in turn makes possible greater sharing of data, more realistic and powerful goal structures, and an ensuing greater interdependence." Whitehead (1959) states that: "First-hand knowledge is the ultimate basis of intellectual life. To a large extent book-learning conveys second-hand information, and as such can never rise to the importance of immediate practice." He goes on to state that "Our goal is to see the immediate events of our lives as instances of our general ideas. What the learned world tends to offer is one second-hand scrap of information illustrating ideas derived from another second-hand scrap of information. The second-handedness of the learned world is the secret of its mediocrity. It is tame because it has never been scarred by facts.

This experiential teaching/learning approach initially appears to be the most promising method of not only providing hands-on experience, but of providing a better and longer lasting educational experience. Carini (1977) points out that "meaning is usually derived from first-hand experiences--to know something firsthand is to know it through yourself--therefore it makes knowing and knowledge highly personal and places the person's meaning and interests squarely at the center of what we call learning."

In order to maintain and improve Suffolk University's College of Business Administration's share of the declining student population, the investigation of the experiential approach will be adequately explained and evaluated in subsequent sections of this report through a survey of the literature and a survey of the practices of other departments and institutions. Not all academicians adhere to this eclectic position with

respect to the theories of learning because they have become strict followers of their chosen theories whether it be Skinners theory, the Gestalt theory, or some other theory.

The following sections will explain how the experiential approach can be implemented into the various theories.

Chapter 2

THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH

It appears that the experiential approach has been developing slowly for many years, one early theorist Froebel (1899) explains it this way: "For the purpose of teaching and instruction is to bring ever more out of man rather than to put more into him; for that which can get into man we already know and possess as the property of mankind. On the other hand, what yet is to come out of mankind, what human nature is yet to develop, what we do not yet know..."

Today this experiential approach appears to be in greater use as is evidenced by more and more text books specifically designed for this purpose. The experiential approach does not appear to have a precise origin in time. Webster's Dictionary's definition for experiential is that which is derived from, based on, or related to experience.

If this definition were to be taken literally, then this approach can conceivably date back to the beginning of recorded history. One well recognized writer, however, tends to place the inception of the experiential approach in much more recent times. Dewey (1948) pointed out: "I take it that the fundamental unity of the newer philosophy [as opposed to the traditional] is found in the idea that there is an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education."

The basic thrust of the experiential approach is that the instructor must resign the authoritative, domineering, traditional role and become what can be described as a manager, coach, resource person, or facilitator of learning. The student thereby increases learning by building on what he/she already knows which leads to not only a more

relevant but also a longer lasting learning. Obviously another aspect of the experiential approach is that the responsibility for learning ultimately rests with the student.

The experiential approach ostensibly can and is being used at all levels of education. Patricia Carini (1977) is her article "Building a Curriculum for Young Children from an Experiential Base" describes how she, for the purpose of example, was able to utilize a group of her young children watching ants. From this experience, she was able to encourage the children to study such things as what do the ants eat and how do they live. The children, with their heightened interest, were encouraged to study the food and homes of even other insects and animals.

Motivation is an important asset of the experiential approach. Cotoia and Noyes (1974) in describing a special motivation to an education program at North Shore Community College state:

> Aimed at stimulating and provoking a student into learning, instead of teaching a student in the traditional manner, the program begins by encouraging him to integrate and to use profitably his present knowledge. Subsequently it stimulates the student to increase his learning in a free and informal academic atmosphere. Thereby the program endeavors to transform him from one who responds possitively to learning, into one who questions, analyzes, initiates, and creates. It seeks to make him a full participant in all his classwork; to allow him, rather than his teachers, to become responsible for his education. It attempts to heighten both his self-image and his career chances.

As mentioned in the introduction, more and more college text books are being designed with emphasis on the experiential approach. Beatly and Schneier (1977) state in their Implementor's Manual for Personnel Administration: An Experiential Skill-Building Approach:

> It is obvious that we feel the experiential mode of learning is effective. It enables parcicipants to become active in learning, it is usually accompanied by heightened interest and motivation, it is capable of fostering positive attitudes about learning, it provides feedback to learners and implementors, and it generally conforms to many of the learning principles derived from theory and research in educational methods.

The structure of this text follows a basic pattern: PREVIEW gives a brief summary of the issues to be covered (typically one paragraph); OBJECTIVES shows the purposes of the exercise (typically listed as 1,2,3...); PREMEETING ASSIGNMENT lists any special preparation (typically the parts not to be read): INTRODUCTION supplies a brief, up-to-date conceptual background of the issue (typically 4-7 pages); PROCEDURE details the instrucions for the individual (typically has several parts or modules and steps); FOR FURTHER READING lists a representative sample of references (typically 25-40) and ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING asks the participants to review what they have done and to keep a record of their learning (typically seven basic questions, three of which are the same for all 19 issues).

Timmons, Smollen, and Dingee (1977) in their text New Venture Creation: A Guide to Small Business Development have divided eighteen chapters into five parts. Each chapter progressively leads to a "Personal Strategy" term paper and/or a "Venture Action Plan". This particular text is quite flexible because it can readily stand alone, or it can complement or supplement other texts, casebooks and readers. It can also be appropriate for the community college, four-year college and graduate levels simply by making certain parts optional.

In the "Instructor's Manual" of the New Venture Creation text, Timmons (1977) explains it this way:

> Learning in a course like this takes place only with personal participation. It means being involved and participating. That does not always mean talking--it can mean active listening. But if you only listen and never test out your own thoughts in class with other members, you are very unlikely to learn as much. Participation is not simply a matter of quantity, or is always "being right" in what you say. Rather, it is the degree to which you make a responsible effort to facilitate the discussion and progress of the class that counts. That way means giving ideas or perceptions that seem unconventional, etc. It is not trying to give the "prof's right answer." Further, much of our learning will come from discussing our experiences, perceptions, and ideas with one another. That means we have to take responsibility for both sharing our ideas with others and trying to listen to and understand others' ideas.

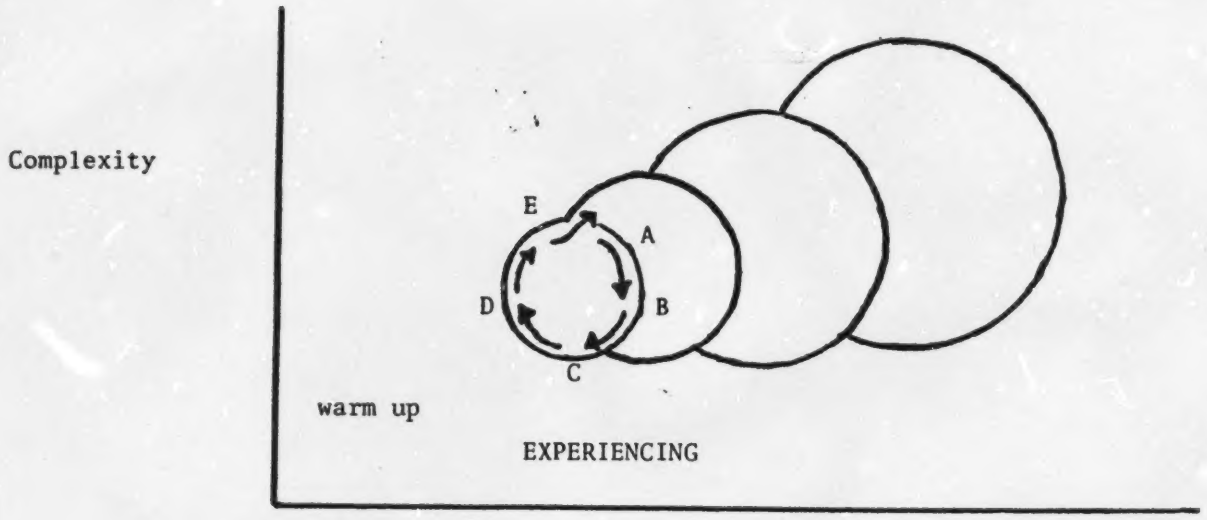
Experiential learning involves the learner in active participation, it is motivating, it provides feedback to the learner and facilitator (teacher) it is usually a more enjoyable experience, and it builds on what the learner already knows resulting in a longer-lasting learning experience. There are, however, some possible limitations that the facilitator should be aware of. The experiential approach can be time-consuming since participants normally work in small groups sharing their ideas and experiences to solve the problem at hand.

Another potential disadvantage is that it can reinforce winning and not learning. The first exercise in Beatty and Schreier's personal text presents seven board of directors interviewing three candidates for a personnel administrators position with the remainder of the class listening and checking to see if proper questions were asked and appropriate answers given. The implementor must make it clear that the one selected is not emphasized as a winner but that the whole class has just participated in a learning experience for the benefit of all. The small business course has has similar results; certain groups have actually become very vocal over various issues such as location, financing, and especially ethics. Although it proved to be an excellent learning session, the overtones of "winning" were present but it is almost a certainty that the participants will never forget their experience.

It appears from the examples given that the experiential approach can and does rely on other teaching methods such as lectures, cases, etc.

Korn (1977) over a five year period, has clearly outlined the essential elements of what he calls experience based on learning or EBL. Appendix A includes his basic thoughts that encompasses a working definition, assumptions, and cautions that any student of the experiential approach should check.

Figure I illustrates graphically the theoretical operations of how learning occurs in the experiential approach.



1. Warm up for risk reduction and acceptance/trust.

2. Experiencing

   A. Purpose - relating to the physical setting
   B. Set tasks - relating to structuring tasks and maintenance needs
   C. Acquiring Data - relating to assessment of needs
   D. Validate Content - relating to checking perceptions with others
   E. Processing - relating to where the real learning occurs

Figure I

Steps in the Learning Process

The increasing size of the concentric circles implies that as time progresses, the learning tasks become more challenging.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

PART I

The Relation of Frederick Skinner's Theories

Most advanced students in the field of education are by now familiar with Skinner's stimulus response theory and the classical example now known as the "Skinner box." In this example a rat was taught to make the correct movement for a reward, and punishment was incurred for making an incorrect movement. From a survey of the literature it can be seen that Skinner tends to basically rely on habits (practice) and trial and error to accomplish learning.

Milhollan and Foriska (1972) tell us that "Skinner identifies a type of learning or conditioning.....respondent conditioning....the second type of learning Skinner calls operant conditioning. They go on to state ....the process of operant conditioning and the very important principle which Thorndike called the Law of Effect and Skinner calls reinforcement. It is through this conditioning process (we refer to as learning) that Skinner believes most behavior is acquired."

The Strong Campbell Interest Inventory (1974) and related writings seem to indicate that there is a certain typical behavior common to students of the same major. Law students tend to have inquisitive minds, an aloofness to non-law students and an influence over others in conversation. Education students tend to have an insatiable appetite for knowledge, they place the needs of others before their own, and are considerably verbose. Students of business want facts without a great deal of frills, they are

conscious of time and their analytical mind operates in an area between mathematics and the humanities.

If part of learning is to condition students to expected behavior as a result of their major, then the experiential approach certainly utilized Skinner's operant conditioning theory.

Since the experiential approach also relies on past experience with progression to more complex learning activities, the reward aspect of Skinner's theory is prevalent. The two texts described in Chapter 2 stress the need to progress at the student's own rate with each exercise successfully completed giving encouragement to move up to the next level.

One must carefully analyze the learning theory proposed by Skinner and look at his total view rather than any single part. In his own book Skinner (1968) discusses three theories:

> We learn by doing. An organism is likely to do again what it has done because conditions responsible for the first response probably still prevail; having observed one occurrence, therefore, we often successfully predict a second, but only because we then have evidence that conditions are favorable.
>
> We learn from experience. From experience alone a student probably learns nothing.....Combining experience with doing, we arrive at a two variable formulation in which 'experience' represents stimulus or input and 'doing' represents response or output.
>
> We learn by trial and error. A sampling of behavior is generally called a trial.....The implication that learning occurs only when errors are made is false."

There is little, if any, punishment associated with the experiential approach unless one includes the student who declines to participate, however, Skinner (1960) does not imply learning by making errors. In his book, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, Skinner (1971) expounds on the aspect of the superiority of reward in the facilitation of learning.

If there is any punishment it would be internal rather than external where others could witness the punishment. The old addage that says you get out what you put in is especially true with the experiential approach.

If a student does not participate, he is punished with lack of learning.

There is a reasonable amount of repetition associated with the experiential approach which correlates with Skinner's belief that "practice makes perfect." The second text described in Chapter 2 presents each topic in three basic steps; the student works alone, the student discusses the topic in small groups, and finally, each group reports their work to the entire class.

Trial and error is another aspect of Skinner's theory that is implemented to some degree in the experiential approach. However, Kelly (1970) points out that experiential learning is

> ....very different from theory based on reward and punishment...the outcome of an experience is not merely a tendency to repeat or to avoid it thereafter, as reinforcement theory presumes, but the conclusions reached through experience are likely to be in the form of new questions which set the stage for new ventures.

The interesting fact is that a substantial position of the trial and error in the experiential approach happens in the classroom in hypothetical exercises rather than in actual life situations. Both of the texts described in Chapter 2 make use of typical business forms, typical business thinking and typical business interactions; they provide "hands on" experiences that are extremely close to reality without becoming involved in the binding decisions of the real world. Extremely few theories provide this type of concrete learning through experience.

The experiential approach qualifies as a Skinner learning theory when the three Skinner theories presented above are considered. The experiential approach involves doing, it involves past experience and it involves trial and error.

PART II

The Relation to the Gestalt Theory

Through a survey of the literature it is found that the Gestalt theory deals primarily with the perception and cognitive process of the central brain power (memory) and insight. Association plays an important role in the experiential approach as the possession of the necessary past experience somehow guarantees the solution. The association theory has been attacked by Kohler and Koffka (in Hilgard and Bowers, 1964) as they dealt with the problem of perception. They developed the Gestalt to arrive at the following four laws:

1. The law of proximity: the closer two elements are, the more likely they are to be grouped together.
2. The law of similarity: items similar in some respect will be grouped together.
3. The law of common direction: the sequence 1,3,5,7___; the next number would be 9.
4. The law of simplicity: tendency toward symmetry, regularity, and smoothness. i.e. a square or circle is simpler than a square with a side missing or a broken circle.

Briefly then, the Gestalt theory deals with insight into problem-solving.

The Gestalt school provides a theory and the experiential school provides the approach or practical application of the theory. Throughout all examples, utilizing the experiential approach, the Gestalt theory is evident. Both exemplify past experience, both deal with perception of problems and both rely on insight.

PART III

The Relation to Carl Rogers' Learning Theory

Basically, Rogers (1974, p. 118) believes that each individual has certain likes and desires and that by captializing on these likes and desires, the individual will willingly learn whatever is necessary to achieve his/her goals. In writing about his forty-six years of teaching Rogers (1974) states: "So for me the humanistic approach is the only possible one. It is for each person, however, to follow the pathway--behavioristic or humanistic--that he finds most congenial." This self-theory operates in the following manner, the student is free to choose his method of learning virtually to the point of a self-directed study. For example, if a student becomes deeply involved in biology, he/she would also be involved in history (of biology), in mathematics (formulas in biology), in English (reports in biology), in foreign language (to read original writings in biology) and in virtually all areas of education. Rogers' theory is obviously easily transferred to any field of knowledge.

Milhollan and Foriska (1972) point out that "Rogers postulates that the goal of education, if we are to survive, must become the facilitation of change and learning." He goes on to point out that "Rogers has discussed certain attitudinal qualities...the first of these...is realness or genuineness." Rogers is saying that the teacher cannot be the traditional teacher but a facilitator and a real person with his students. To Rogers, as Milhollan and Foriska explained it, the task of the instructor is one that involves caring but not of a possessive or controlling nature.

Korn (1974, p. 8) in writing about his Experience Based Learning (EBL) points out that:

Carl Rogers' assumptions about education and the meaningfulness of the learning process provide a clear humanistic statement of the underlying philosophy of the EBL course.

1. Human beings have a natural potential for learning.
2. Significant learning takes place when the subject matter is perceived by the student as having relevance for his own purposes.
3. Learning which involves change of self organization--in the perception of oneself--is threatening and tends to be resented.
4. Those learnings which are threatening to the self are more easily perceived and assimilated when external threats are at a minimum.
5. When threat to the self is low, experience can be perceived in differentiated fashion, and learning can proceed.
6. Much significant learning is acquired through doing.
7. Learning is facilitated when the student participates responsibly in the learning process: choosing his own goals, discovering his own learning resources; formulating his own problems; deciding his own courses of action; and living with the consequences of each of these choices.
8. Self-initiated learning which involves the whole person of the learner--feelings as well as intellect--is the most lasting and pervasive.
9. Independence, creativity, and self reliance are all facilitated when self criticism and self evaluation are basic, and evaluation by others is of secondary importance.
10. The most socially useful learning in the modern world is the learning of the process of learning, a continuing openness to experience and incorporation into oneself of the process of change.

(Rogers, 1967; 1969, pp. 157-163)

Writing in Freedom to Learn (1969), Rogers argues that learning and classroom interactions can be joyful and fulfilling to both teachers and students. Mutual respect and acknowledgment of the validity of individual choice and experience underlie the learning process in a group situation. Successful and meaningful education must deal with the whole person, in contrast to exclusive focus on intellectual development.

Rogers (1969, p. 279-296) states that education systems which do not attend to the emotional side of people create students who are only half-educated. Knowles (1973, p. 391) points out that Rogers' work in personality and behavior "...led hom to conceptualize student-centered teaching as parallel to client-centered therapy."

The experiential approach fits somewhere in the middle of Rogers' learning theory which is actually more akin to a teaching technique. The student is not completely free to choose any method of learning. The student is however, free to choose how to obtain (if not already

possessed by experience) the necessary information to solve a specific problem. The small business text may be working on a location module and the student is free to solve this problem by additional text book reading, discussions with others, visits to government agencies or any method available. Similarly the personnel management text may be working on a module on sources of executive manpower with similar options available to the student.

The experiential approach operates in a manner in which one module is studied after another with Rogers' theory fitting in to solve the problem at hand. Both consider the instructor in terms of a coach or a facilitator of learning, this is perhaps the strongest relationship between Rogers' theory and the experiential approach.

PART IV

The Relation to Malcolm Knowles' Adult Learning Theory

Although Knowles has written about his theory, (1950, 1970, 1973, and 1975) most people have accepted his ideas but little has been done to prove or disprove his assumptions--they apparently are just accepted.

Rather than theory, it may be more accurate to label Knowles' ideas as an approach. Knowles (1970, p.39) lists four major differences between adults and children: (1) their self concept is different, (2) they have different experiences, (3) there is a difference in their readiness to learn, and (4) there is a difference in their orientation to learning. His basic premise is that the adult learner is basically different from the traditional grade school student; the adult wants to apply immediately what has been learned, whereas the student takes one course in order to take the next course. According to Knowles, the environment must be different and less threatening for the adult learner to dispell any notion that the adult may feel of returning to the disciplined atmosphere of their early childhood. The recommendations he makes includes the substitution of a flip-chart for a blackboard, comfortable seating arranged in circles or half-circles or even sitting on the floor. All of which relate directly to the "warm up" as displayed in Figure I on page 8.

Knowles relates most directly to the setting which is an essential aspect of the experiential approach. The right climate for learning must exist; conditions for risk reduction must exist; the acceptance and the feeling of trust are all given primary emphasis by Knowles and the experiential approach. Knowles (1950, p. 21) points out that the first requirement for learning is the desire to learn and he states that "Most psychologists would agree with Samuel Butler that the best time to learn

something is when you feel acutely uncomfortable about not knowing it."

Knowles (1950, pp. 31-35) outlines his thirteen "Principles of Adult Teaching."

1. The student should understand and subscribe to the purpose of the course...the student should have a part in setting goals.
2. The student should want to learn.
3. There should be a friendly and informal climate in the learning situation.
4. Physical conditions should be favorable.
5. The student should participate and should accept some responsibility for the learning process.
6. Learning should be related to and make use of the students' experience.
7. The teacher should know his subject matter.
8. The teacher should be enthusiastic about his subject and about teaching.
9. Students should be able to learn at their own pace.
10. The student should be aware of his own progress and should have a strong sense of accomplishment.
11. The methods of instruction should be varied.
12. The teacher should have a sense of growth.
13. The teacher should have a flexible plan for the course.

Coincidentally, all thirteen principles do apply to the experiential approach and number six seems to imply that Knowles himself adheres to it.

Chapter 4

APPLICATION TO A NEW COURSE

The application of the experiential approach appears to be especially well suited to a proposed three credit, pass/fail course, (Sutherland, 1978) for seniors in career and life planning. This course could easily have daily sessions composed of three parts: part one, the student works alone either by doing the assignment at home or in class, part two, the students could discuss their points of view and come to a consensus, and in part three, each group could report to the entire class or prepare a written report for the facilitator. The learning comes through the various experiences which are being shared and the insight gained through group interaction. The Gestalt theory would be the primary theory used along with the theories and methods of all the others being combined into an eclectic approach. This course would be offered in an attempt to integrate individual counseling into a classroom situation. The small, leaderless groups in effect, obtain their guidance from the facilitator.

The three primary areas or modules to be covered in this course are: (1) know ones' self, (2) know what is available in the world of work and (3) match the two. According to Skinner's theories, we learn by doing, we learn from experience and we learn by trial and error. All three aspects of Skinner's theory would be evident in this course but especially in the last section, which is the marketing campaign or the matching of self to the most ideal career position.

It is anticipated that this new course would be physically

arranged according to most of the suggestions made by Knowles concerning the adult learner, for example, the flip charts and chairs arranged in a circle, etc. The instructor becomes a facilitator as described by Rogers and follows Skinner's three theories: learning by doing, learning from experience, and learning by trial and error.

The successful implementor for this course would ideally have a background in teaching, counseling and marketing. As Yenawine (1975) points out that there is a "blending of the ability to teach and inspire (teaching ability), a deep understanding and rapport with people (counseling ability) and an expanding knowledge of the world of work (marketing/management ability)." An interest test such as the Strong-Campbell would be used to help identify the likes, desires and even qualifications of the individual. Teaching experience would be helpful in explaining the test and counseling experience would be needed to help guide each individual. In effect, the method utilized for this course would be described by those involved with group counseling as a structured, goal-oriented, T-group type counseling.

The marketing/management background would be a most desirable one for the implementor in the third section of the course when the participants are matching self to a career, or in other words, the marketing campaign. This marketing campaign is quite difficult for most students because it involves selling oneself to a prospective employer. The difficulty lies in the fact that career changes may only happen three or four times during ones' lifetime and most individuals are actually neophytes facing the experienced professional employer.

Since career planning draws directly on past experiences, this experiential approach utilizes those of each individual, in effect it is a drawing out process. Most humans fail to recognize many of their past accomplishments and it is accomplishments that the potential employer

seeks. It can realistically be assumed that what one has accomplished in the past can serve as an indicator of what one can do in the future. For example, it was suggested to one middle-aged unemployed electronics engineer that he go into business for himself. This idea was immediately rejected on the grounds that he felt that he had no business experience. It was eventually discovered that when he was only twelve years old he had borrowed money for a used power lawn mower and that by the end of the season he had accumulated a fleet of power lawn movers with a crew under his supervision cutting lawns.

Most individuals tend to overlook their accomplishments because they have become part of them and are no longer considered anything special. An individual brought up in a home that speaks a foreign language is a typical example, the language is rarely voluntarily listed as an accomplishment. Instructors of other courses can easily apply the experiential approach for a more relevant, longer lasting learning experience. In an English course of poem analysis, for example, the instructor could have the students read the poems for homework, discuss the poems in small groups during the class period and either write up the groups interpretation for the facilitator or have a general class discussion on the meaning of the poem. Virtually all courses can utilize the small group discussion if time permits.

SUMMARY AND EXPECTATIONS

The purpose of this paper was to point out how various learning theories are incorporated into the experiential approach. Two texts, one in personnel and the other in small business, were used as typical models and the last chapter indicated how one might apply it to a brand new course in career and life planning. In the broad sense, virtually all courses are experiential. If it is desired for students to obtain "hands-on" experience in a classroom setting, then there appears to be no better way than this experiential approach.

The key to utilizing the experiential approach is to allow the individuals to express their views and past experiences. The larger the traditional class is, the more difficult it becomes to allow active participation from each participant. This approach, however, advocated a three-step learning process which, in effect, is the basic learning theory of repetition. The student works alone, the student works in a small group so that each has an opportunity to participate, and the small groups either report on their findings to the rest of the class or the participants prepare a final report to the facilitator. If an instructor is a particular follower of Skinner, Rogers, Knowles or the Gestalt school, still elements of the experiential approach can be readily utilized. Suffolk University faculty should become aware of the advantages and disadvantages as they are developed in this paper and consider the implementation of this approach in their own respective courses.

This paper will be presented to Suffolk University's undergraduate curriculum committee and to the assistant dean of the College of Business Administration. The ultimate goal will be for

both parties to present this method of instruction to any and all faculty that has a need and desire to implement this experiential approach. This approach expands the statement made by a well-known management consultant, Peter Drucker (1972, p.54) "...that in schools of the future all students will be defined as capable, each seen as learning at his own pace in his own way."

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GUIDELINES FOR USING EXPERIENCE-BASED LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

Paul Korn 1976

1. A working definition of experience-based learning (EBL).

A teaching/learning situation or series of situations where attention is paid to actively involving people in experiences which exemplify and/or dramatize a particular concept or concepts. Emphasis is placed on increasing an individual's awareness of his/her experience during the situation, providing an opportunity for reflection on that experience, and assisting in the integration of the new experience and awareness.

2. Some assumptions about experience-based learning.

People naturally learn from their experience. Frequently, they are not aware of this experience-based learning. Also, limited experience limits learning.

Students learn best in situations which combine thinking, feeling, and doing. In EBL situations, students learn to link up particular cognitive labels with personal feelings and behavior.

An EBL lesson is part of a total classroom experience which also includes lectures by the teacher, small group discussions, and quiet alone-time for individual thought.

Student input on many topics is as important and more relevant than teacher input. An EBL classroom assures that all ideas and reactions are voiced, if desired, and attended to.

Each student learns differently and may focus on different elements of the RBL lesson. Each student should be explicitly given control over his/her level of involvement. Activities should be planned to realize differences in readiness, confidence, self-awareness, and expressive skill. Activities should provide for naturally evolving detours.

Creative play, creative risking, experimentation bring about opportunities to try new thoughts, actions and feelings, and discover more about self in relation to subject matter.

Self awareness, self-as-focus, and centering bring about opportunities to realize, accept and learn more about self in relation to subject matter.

Experiential learning is best facilitated by opportunities to focus directly on the experience and to discuss reactions with others in a trusting, supportive atmosphere. Alone-time is often necessary to focus. Frequently, students must be taught listening and group skills to encourage the sharing/clarifying process that occurs in a small group.

The evolving process of the learning situation is as important as the end product of the lesson. Students can learn a great deal by periodically attending to what they do, how they choose, how they reason.

EBL is personal goal oriented, depending entirely on the will of the learner to learn. The teacher may structure the opportunities for learning but only in the hope of the learner's responding. The learner has the ultimate responsibility for involvement, choice, focus and integration.

Some Assumptions (continued)

EBL strives to deal with living issues and to enliven all issues focused on in the classroom. Apart from increasing the learner's intellectual awareness of topics, the teacher is in a powerful position to teach a means of making learning and living relevant to the learner.

The more an individual knows about her/his own style of learning, the more effective that individual will be as a learner from experience.

3. The basic structure of an experienc-based learning lesson.

   a. General lecture about the topic or issue, providing an overview and an orientation.

   b. Focus on a particular concept, elaboration on the concept.

   c. The experiential activity which offers the learners an opportunity to use, act on, play with or behave with the concept.

   d. The process time which offers learners a chance and guidelines to digest the experience, to focus on their reactions and observations, perhaps to share and discuss.

   e. A wrap-up which attempts to tie together all that has occured including the cognitive and theoretical as well as the emotional and personal, not to mention detours and ramifications.

4. Some cautions and considerations about using experience-based learning.

The EBL strategy multiplies the roles of the classroom teacher. In addition to information source, lecturer and evaluator, other roles emerge such as group facilitator, counselor, guinea pig, demonstrator, mediator, time-keeper, target, learner...

Letting go of tight control of the classroom situation creates opportunities for multiple control and chaos. Many of us panic in these situations.

Limited awareness of self on the part of the teacher may create inappropriate activities and incomplete learning - in short, greater confusion.

EBL strategies are balanced between control and chaos, freedom, and direction.

Asking learners to focus on feelings brings feelings into the classroom realm. Some feelings are difficult to handle. Teachers again are limited by their own ability to flow with and manage their own feelings.

EBL teachers may rightfully be asked to participate in the same experiments and experiences as they ask learners to try.

Allowing each learner to learn what they want to from a lesson means more difficulty in grading and evaluation of the student, not to mention eliminating a traditional source of feedback to the teacher. This fact necessitates building in evaluation and feedback structures.

EBL strategies make the disinterested, recalcitrant and resistant learners more visible, as well as the motor-mouths and brown-nosers.

EBL strategies take time. Choices must be made continually between quantity of material and quality of experience.

Using EBL may force the teacher to re-examine his/her own values about education, learning, etc.

Using EBL is more than just stringing together a bunch of games, gimmicks, and techniques. Real learning takes time and cannot happen instantaneously. Without processing or talking-through, EBL strategies can leave learners opened up and unfinished, with no way of dealing constructively with the experiences and feelings brought up; and with a mistrust of what seems like just a turn-on for the teacher.

Without group focus and sharing built in, EBL can create egocentric "self-actualizers" who learn idiosyncratic freedom without being able to respond to others' feelings and reactions.

Many students have no significant support bases to help them in their maturing through school. EBL in the classroom may identify the teacher as "one who understands and will listen"; this fact may lead to students seeking you out after class to talk, to listen, to advise, to counsel.

If EBL strategies occur in a traditional educational system, students and teachers must deal with the miltiple reactions of others to their style of teaching/learning.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT OPINIONS OF THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH

Although all student comments made in both the Small Business and Personnel course can be regarded as favorable, the sampling contained here tends to justify the continuance and improvement of this approach.

Comments of Students from A Small Business Administration Class

"I was pleased with the course in general. The teacher did put a lot of effort into the course and it showed because the class was very organized and thought-provoking."

"I think the style of the course was excellent. The new venture that I got involved in was probably the best thing I've done in college. I knew I could not leave any detail out or assume anything."

"I found the approach of Timmons, Smollen, and Dinger to the topic of Small Business, Entrepreneurs, and new ventures, exciting, agressive and progressive. Their approach to open teaching (hands-on) was refreshing and rewarding. The chance to rethink something that I have already thought about, was gratifying. I now know why so many people have told me that I will do alright. The design of the book and material covered was impressive. There is plenty of room to advance as fast and as much as possible on ones own."

"I'm glad I took the course. I learned more in this course than many others that I have taken. It's helping my business right now."

"I felt that this approach was unique in many ways. Because of all self-assessment exercises which help evaluate your strengths, weaknesses and personal experiences and group discussions which you exchange different ideas, problems, and learning experiences."

Comments of Students from a Personnel Administration Course

"I am actively involved and can voice my opinion and weigh others opinions."

"It gives you more than textbook theories, and you can actually see how certain aspects of personnel work should be done."

"The participation and involvement to the fact that students are given an opportunity to learn by doing and given confidence through experience. Students also have the opportunity to learn by their own mistakes or those of others."

"Having group discussions and evaluations, interviews, too is helpful to learn the procedure. The best way to grasp this kind of material is by doing."